

Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: The next amendment I have is by Senator Wesely. It is AM42'76. It can be found in the Journal on page 1732.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Senator Wesely, to open on your amendment.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. Mr. President, members, this is an amendment I will bring to a vote, and so I ask for your indulgence in a discussion about it. We discussed on General File the issue of raising the minimum wage. I was very disappointed to see us decide not to adopt a 25-cent increase in the minimum wage. I do feel that the public feels differently about that. I do feel that there is concern across the state about the wage level of Nebraskans. Again, figures that I've passed out have indicated that our wage levels in our state are at the bottom of various states. I do have a handout that shows the rankings I've got from various sources have us 45th, 46th, or 47th, depending on which study looks at the question of wages. In any event the 45th to 47th in anything regarding the economic well-being of our citizens should be cause for alarm, but when our wages have dropped to that level, I think it is time for action. So I am, again, offering an amendment to deal with the question of wages. The minimum wage, as I remember, was argued against because it was felt to help teenagers, which it doesn't. Teenagers are capped for something between 15 and up, most, 30 percent of those receiving the minimum wage. There was also the feeling that a 25-cent increase would be inadequate, which, of course, I would love to see a much higher increase, but we thought at least 25 cents would be a step forward. And there was concern that what we really needed to do was address the good paying jobs that we need in the state of Nebraska, and let the market take care of the situation with the minimum wages. So I listen to your arguments, and I am back here with a different approach to deal with the wage issue. We have a lever through our tax incentive legislation that we have never pulled to try to address the question of wages in the state of Nebraska. We have too low wages in this state. The jobs that we have in our state pay too little. That's wonderful for the business community. I am sure that it is a great attraction to business to be able to come into this state, but, in my view, that is not why we want to attract business. What we want to attract are businesses that pay good wages, that have